

Washington Update, November 25th, 2009

As we in America prepare to celebrate the great holiday of Thanksgiving we should think about the situation in Ethiopia right now where 8,000,000 million Ethiopians face imminent starvation, according to the United Nations' most recent report.

This is really two problems. Immediately we need to urge our Congress persons to resume direct food aid to the affected regions of Ethiopia. But second we must share our awareness that this famine, like all other famines in history, is a political creation used by those in power to crush any opposition to its rule.

Right now the European Union and the United States Department of State have expressed concerns regarding distribution of food supplied by the United States and intended for the poor and starving. Opposition observers have repeatedly made accusations about the misuse of the international food aid to benefit the regime. Karl Wycoff, a deputy assistant secretary of state, told reporters in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa that ... "We are very much concerned about it." We are aware of the reports and we take such reports very, very seriously."

While all this is going on the course of events here in Washington return once again to the crucial issue of legislation in Congress. We all need to continue to contact our members of the House and Senate to urge passage of new legislation demanding democracy, human rights, and development for all Ethiopians. According to the Staff Director of the House Africa Subcommittee, Noelle LuSane, we are still waiting for the Obama administration to develop a new policy strategy for Africa, including Ethiopia.

Now there is an agreement with the regime that international election observers will be in Ethiopia to observe the next election (May, 2010). This is the result of the Addis Ababa agreement that Engineer Hailu Shawel entered into with the regime and other opposition groups. In essence the All Ethiopia Unity Party (AEUP) was willing to sign a document pledging support for free and democratic elections.

It did so, not out of trust of the good intentions of the regime, but in recognition of the fact that in a free and fair election the regime would likely lose and if the election is not free and fair, after they signed this agreement, the election would be seen by all, including the international election observers, as a fraud.

We reassure all Ethiopians that this was a mature decision; one not taken lightly. The AEUP is a peaceful organization; one that has chosen a non-violent

road to democracy; there is no reasonable excuse for violence. We will soon see if the regime honors its word.

Engineer Hailu Shawel spoke in Addis Ababa with concerned Ethiopians live on KAEUP radio last Sunday where he went on at length describing the benefits to Ethiopia and Ethiopians of the election agreement and its code of conduct which is the centerpiece of the agreement.

AEUP also demonstrated the fact that it is a truly national party as members from all ethnic groups and regions are represented in AEUP. Live on radio members of AEUP from Baherdar, Benshangul, Tigre, and other Ethiopian regions spoke out in support Engineer Hailu Shawel and his party – AEUP the signed document with the regime and other opposition parties. All stressed the positive aspects and urged the avoidance of confrontation.

The Ethiopian Diaspora is critical for success in Ethiopia. This week again we will have on KAEUP radio representatives from AEUP. Our radio show is on 1390 am at 3:00 p.m. every Sunday

It is also available on our Web site:

<http://www.kaeup.org>

Please tune in!

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